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Legislation banning illegal use of traffic-signal controllers sent to governor

Lansing – Personal purchase, possession or use of traffic-signal controllers will result in fines and penalties under legislation being sent to the governor.

The legislation, sponsored by Sens. Jud Gilbert, R-Algonac, Tony Stamas, R-Midland, is designed to limit the use of all signal preemption devices such as Mobile Infrared Transmitters to authorized personnel only.

“These devices should only be in the hands of emergency workers and the authorities,” Gilbert said. “Sending this legislation to the governor means we’re one step closer to making our roads safer for motorists and pedestrians.”

The devices emit a signal to receivers installed at intersections and, when within a 1,500-foot range, can change a light from red to green out of sequence, allowing emergency vehicles to more easily pass through the intersection.

Michigan is leading the way in making make the devices illegal to own and operate. Other states, including Indiana and Ohio, also are considering similar legislation. In addition, a bill has been introduced in the U.S. Congress.

Under the legislation, penalties for offenders include:

- A misdemeanor charge with up to 90 days in jail and a fine of \$5,000 for the unlawful possession of a signal preemption device;
- A felony charge punishable by imprisonment of up to two years and a fine of \$10,000 for the unlawful sale or purchase of a signal preemption device; and
- Felony charges punishable by imprisonment of up to five years and a fine of \$15,000 for individuals using a signal preemption device resulting in a traffic crash. If the use of a signal preemption device results in death, the penalty is a felony charge punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and a fine of \$25,000.